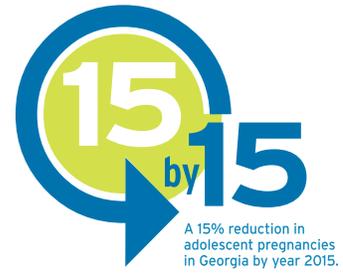


TAKING TIME for TEENS



State Sex Education Policy for Georgia Public Schools

State Instructional Requirements

Georgia law requires local boards of education to develop and implement a course of study in sex education and AIDS prevention as part of an accurate, comprehensive health education program. Local school boards are largely responsible for deciding the content and grade level at which topics are introduced, but at minimum the instruction must cover: “the handling of peer pressure, the promotion of high self-esteem, local community values, the legal consequences of parenthood, and abstinence from sexual activity as an effective method of prevention of pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and acquired immune deficiency syndrome” (AIDS).ⁱ Local school boards that fail to implement this minimum course of study or its equivalent are ineligible for state funding.

In addition, the State Board of Education requires that sex education “instruction shall emphasize abstinence from sexual activity until marriage and fidelity in marriage as important personal goals.”ⁱⁱ The State Department of Education also recommends Quality Core Curriculum Standards for sex education for various grade levels.ⁱⁱⁱ These standards include instruction, beginning in the 6th grade, regarding abstinence as the “only sure method” or the “most effective method” of preventing pregnancy, HIV/AIDS, and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs).

Local School Board Sex Education Committees

The State Board of Education requires each local school board to establish a committee to periodically review sex and HIV/AIDS education instructional materials and make recommendations to the board regarding the most appropriate ages for instruction.ⁱⁱ The committee must be composed mainly of non-teaching parents with children enrolled in the local schools, in addition to educators, health professionals and other community representatives. The committees must also include a male and a female student currently enrolled in the 11th or 12th grades in the local public schools.

Parental Opt-Out Policy

Parents or guardians may remove their children from all or part of sex and HIV/AIDS education by sending written notice to the school.

Contraceptives on School Property

Georgia law prohibits school employees, facilities on school property or facilities operated by the school district from distributing contraceptives.^{iv} The Department of Education and local units are also expressly forbidden from using state funds for the distribution of contraceptives.

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GEORGIA CAMPAIGN FOR
ADOLESCENT PREGNANCY PREVENTION
INSPIRED FUTURES WITHIN REACH

Summary of State Requirements

- **Local Control.** State law leaves discretion to local school boards regarding age-appropriate sex education curriculum decisions. The state outlines minimum instructional requirements for sex education, but local school boards for the most part have the ability to determine the specific content of the instruction and the grade level at which instruction occurs.
- **Abstinence-Plus.** The state requires that sex education instruction emphasize abstinence from sexual activity as the most effective method of preventing teen pregnancy, sexually transmitted diseases, and HIV/AIDS. State law also allows for additional instruction regarding information that students need to make responsible decisions to protect their health over time. Local school boards may choose to adopt an "abstinence-plus" curriculum that emphasizes abstinence and covers medically-accurate information regarding contraception and disease-prevention methods.

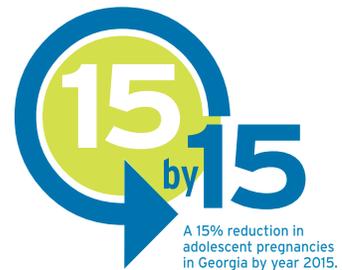
School systems that directly receive federal abstinence-only-until-marriage (Adolescent Family Life Act, Community-Based Abstinence Education, Title V) grants must spend those funds on abstinence-only education. School systems that do not receive this funding are not impacted by federal guidelines.

Schools officials - teachers, social workers, nurses, guidance counselors, and graduation coaches – may discuss teen pregnancy prevention with students and refer them to local health departments for family planning counseling.

- **Parental Choice.** Parents may "opt out" of sex education instruction for their children. They are not required to provide prior permission for their children to receive instruction.
- **Community Input.** Each local board must establish a committee that reflects the local community to periodically review sex and HIV/AIDS education instructional materials and make recommendations to the board regarding curricula and the most appropriate ages for instruction.

- i The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, "Sex education and AIDS prevention instruction; implementation; student exemption." § 20-2-143 (2007). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/hottopics/gacode/default.asp>.
- ii Georgia Department of Education Rule 160-4-2-.12 (2000). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-4-2-.12.pdf.
- iii Georgia Department of Education, Quality Core Curriculum Standards, Health. (2002). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/qcc-5-8-2008/qccs-in-pdf-format.htm>.
- iv The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, "Restrictions on student health services; utilization of state funds." § 20-2-773 (2007). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/hottopics/gacode/default.asp>.

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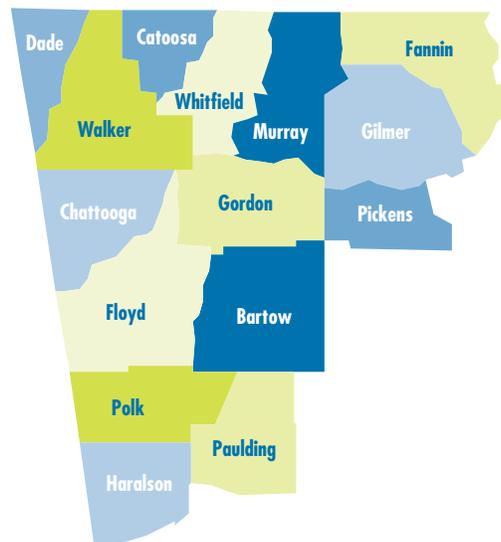


REGION 1

Georgia Local School Board Sex Education Policies

Includes:

Bartow, Catoosa, Chattooga, Dade, Fannin, Floyd, Gilmer, Gordon, Haralson, Murray, Paulding, Pickens, Polk, Walker and Whitfield Counties



The following county boards of education, and selected city boards of education, in Region 1 have sex education policies that largely mirror the state's guidelines:*

Catoosa County

Dalton City

Gilmer County

Paulding County

Rome City

Chattooga County

Fannin County

Haralson County

Pickens County

Walker County

Dade County

Floyd County

Murray County

Polk County

These policies include requirements to:

- *emphasize abstinence as an effective method, the most effective method, or the only sure method for preventing pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections.*
- *promote abstinence until marriage and fidelity during marriage as important personal goals.*
- *give parents the opportunity to review sex education materials and have the right to opt-out, or elect in writing to exclude their child from this instruction.*
- *have the board appoint a committee to periodically review sex and HIV/AIDS education instructional materials and make recommendations concerning grade level use.*

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The following county boards of education in Region 1 have sex education policies with requirements that go beyond the state's guidelines. The additional requirements are summarized below.

The Bartow County Board of Education policy states that:

- *at no time while on school property or at any official school function can any individual or any member of a public or private agency/organization distribute or direct students where they can receive condoms, birth control pills or other contraception or family planning services.*
- *parental written permission must be obtained prior to any instruction regarding sex education/AIDS prevention (this is an opt-in instead of an opt-out policy.)*

The Whitfield County Board of Education policy states that:

- *instruction shall include abstinence from sexual activity as the only effective method of preventing acquired immune deficiency syndrome, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted disease.*

* References:

1. The Official Code of Georgia Annotated, "Sex education and AIDS prevention instruction; implementation; student exemption." § 20-2-143 (2007). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.lexis-nexis.com/hottopics/gacode/default.asp> .
2. Georgia Department of Education Rule 160-4-2-.12 (2000). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/_documents/doe/legalservices/160-4-2-.12.pdf .
3. Georgia Department of Education, Quality Core Curriculum Standards, Health. (2002). Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.glc.k12.ga.us/qcc-5-8-2008/qccs-in-pdf-format.htm> .
4. Georgia School Boards Association (2008). GSBA e-Policy. Retrieved May 9, 2008 from <http://www.gsbaepolicy.org/>. [Notes: Online policy unavailable for Gordon County.]